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ABSTRACT

Intended for use by local education agencies and communities in developing and improving their literacy programs, this publication presents, in rating scale form, the elements that are essential in creating programs that are effective and comprehensive. The areas to be rated by the scale include leadership, community involvement, program organization, materials and methods, and teachers. The publication also includes a definition of "literacy," a statement of the philosophy underlying the Right to Read program in Illinois, the criteria for a community-wide literacy program, instructions for using the rating scale, and a list of members of the Right to Read State Advisory Council for 1978-1979. (FL)

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CRITERIA OF EXCELLENCE

FOR

LITERACY PROGRAMS IN ILLINOIS

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CS 004 874

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FOREWORD

In 1975 the State Board of Education adopted the goal of "Improving Reading and Literacy." This goal is based on the belief that every school system should assure its community that students are prepared to leave the schools with the ability to read and communicate effectively. Every community should provide programs to assure every citizen's right to read.

In order to enhance the opportunities of the citizens of the State to achieve this goal, the Illinois Office of Education established a Right to Read Advisory Council. One of the major priorities of this committee has been the development of Criteria of Excellence for Literacy Programs in Illinois.

The publication lists the elements essential to a well-planned, comprehensive literacy program. The document is to be used by local education agencies and the community in working toward the improvement of their literacy programs. Because conditions vary in every school system and community, how the criteria are used should be determined on the basis of local conditions, needs, and capabilities.

Grateful acknowledgement is given to the many educators and community leaders who field-tested this document.

The State Right to Read Advisory Council and the Illinois Office of Education offer Criteria of Excellence for Literacy Programs in Illinois as useful tools toward enhancing literacy opportunities in our State.

Joseph M. Cronin
Joseph M. Cronin
State Superintendent of Education

LITERACY

What is Literacy?

"Literacy" is determined by the interrelationship of many abilities, including reading, writing, speaking, listening, viewing and thinking. The goal of the National Right to Read Effort is the elimination of illiteracy. The program is based on the premise that, given the opportunity to participate in an effective individualized process, and using multiple approaches in method, adults and children can become literate.

Literacy in America

A 1970 survey by Louis Harris and Associates identified 18 million adults as having less than adequate reading skills. A later study by Harris (1971) identifies an equally large number of illiterates: it was estimated that more than 15 million adults would have serious problems responding correctly to the printed word in real-life situations. The Adult Performance Level (APL) Project (1975) reported that more than 35 million adults read with some difficulty and an additional 39 million read with considerable difficulty. The National Center for Health Statistics (Vogt, 1973) found that more than 1 million noninstitutionalized youths 12 to 17 years old in the United States cannot read at the beginning fourth grade level.[1]

Problems of Providing Literacy Opportunities

Both the amount of funding at the national, state and local level and the policies and procedures that guide the utilization of these funds affect literacy development. The quality of materials available for literacy learning, the types of literacy programs that can be provided from the preschool through the adult level and pupil-teacher ratio as determined by class size are all affected by funding. In addition, the style and quality of teaching directly affect student achievement. Other factors relate to the individual differences of children in such areas as cultural and language background; physical, mental, and physiological development; intellectual stimulation from the home and environment; and emotional development.

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[1] Fisher, Donald L., Functional Literacy and the Schools. Washington, D.C.: National Institute of Education, January, 1978, pp. 1-2.

PHILOSOPHY

The basic philosophical assumptions underlying Right to Read in Illinois are:

Every individual in a democratic society must have the opportunity to develop literacy proficiencies to the limits of his/her potential and desire.

Each individual is unique, with his/her own rate of growth and development.

Literacy is an integral aspect of learning, and instruction in literacy must be a continuous process.

Each teacher must recognize the role of literacy in his/her field and provide needed assistance.

It is the responsibility of each community to develop a local program that meets the literacy needs of its population, from the preschool through the adult level.

Every community in Illinois has different literacy needs and resources that can be used to meet those needs. The impetus to improve opportunities to develop literacy proficiency among the entire local population should come from within the community rather than being mandated from without.

A well-planned and implemented literacy program would ultimately result in the development of a social consciousness about the importance of literacy in day-to-day living. The traditions and values of a community should emphasize literacy in order to provide the broadest possible life experiences for all segments of the population. The entire community should be willing to work together with the goal of developing a community literacy ethic.

CRITERIA RATIONALE

The attached Criteria describe the qualities that a community-wide literacy program might have. Such a program would be planned and implemented as a result of the cooperative efforts of many community members. Existing formal and informal educational efforts from the preschool through the adult level would be coordinated, eliminating duplication and closing gaps in services.

These Criteria may be used by local education agencies and community members in one of three ways:

1. Planning a Literacy Program

   The Criteria of Excellence can be used as a checklist of items to be considered in defining, planning and implementing a coordinated community literacy effort when one does not presently exist.

2. Evaluating a Functioning Literacy Program

   Schools which already have a number of existing literacy-related services provided for the public may want to use the Criteria of Excellence to measure the effectiveness of such programs. (Please note: this instrument is for internal evaluation only and should not be returned to the Illinois Office of Education.)

3. Identifying Exemplary Literacy Programs

   An exemplary community literacy effort may not encompass all of the Criteria, although each of the general areas should be addressed. The Criteria of Excellence may be used as a bench mark against which existing services can be measured.

The Criteria of Excellence were developed by a Task Force of the Illinois Right to Read Advisory Council. They represent the combined thinking of the Task Force members in conjunction with ideas which were contributed by many educators throughout the State. The Criteria do not endorse any one teaching method or curricular approach.

Below are the broad categories into which the Criteria of Excellence have been divided:

A. LEADERSHIP
B. COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT
C. PROGRAM ORGANIZATION
D. MATERIALS AND METHODS
E. THE TEACHER

USING THE RATING SCALE

The first step in rating a reading program against the Criteria of Excellence is a self-study, using the rating scales provided in the instrument. The complete instrument is provided in the section following this page.

Each criterion includes its own set of "indicators" which should measure the degree to which each of these standards is being met. The scales following each indicator are rated from 1 to 5. The key is printed below:

1 means NOT STARTED

2 means SOME PROGRESS

3 means SIGNIFICANT PROGRESS

4 means ALMOST ACHIEVED

5 means ACHIEVED

In using the Criteria of Excellence as a measuring tool, do the following: for each set of indicators under a single criterion, use different colors to circle where your program stands at three points in time--1) first review; 2) interim review; 3) final review.

A profile can be drawn by connecting the circles with straight lines. The result is a visual picture of how your program is progressing in reading.

It is essential to understand that the value is not in the score achieved, but in the use of the criteria as a means of studying the total reading program to determine strategies for improvement.

ILLINOIS RIGHT TO READ

CRITERIA OF EXCELLENCE FOR LITERACY PROGRAMS

Circle One

I. LEADERSHIP

A. The Board of Education or other administering bodies proclaim publicly that the development of literacy in the entire community population is a priority of local education institutions.

1. The administering body has publicly announced that literacy is a priority in the community. 1 2 3 4 5

2. Local leadership has been shown through budgetary appropriations. 1 2 3 4 5

3. Local leadership has been shown through parental education programs. 1 2 3 4 5

4. Local leadership has been interpreted through revised curricular approaches. 1 2 3 4 5

B. The program director is a qualified educator in the community who has the backing of educational leaders to coordinate a community-wide literacy effort.

1. The program director has attended a Right to Read training program. 1 2 3 4 5

2. The program director has an educational reading background. 1 2 3 4 5

3. The program director has been allocated sufficient time for developing a program of literacy services. 1 2 3 4 5

4. The program director has been allocated sufficient resources for developing a program of literacy services. 1 2 3 4 5

C. Consultative services are available to aid in the development of a local literacy program.

1. The program facility has consulted with Educational Specialists from the Illinois Office of Education. 1 2 3 4 5

2. The local program director is aware of or has utilized consultative services of other educational agencies. 1 2 3 4 5

3. State and national publications on Right to Read have been used by the local literacy program sponsoring agency. 1 2 3 4 5

D. Teachers and administrators work together in developing and implementing a sound literacy program.

1. An inventory has been taken of the talent pool that exists among the administrators and faculty of the local Right to Read agency. 1 2 3 4 5

2. The expertise available has been incorporated in the local literacy program. 1 2 3 4 5

3. Ideas from faculty members have been included in developing the literacy program. 1 2 3 4 5

4. Faculty members have been encouraged to try new approaches to teaching literacy skills and motivating students to read. 1 2 3 4 5

E. Adequate resources are used to support a dynamic literacy effort.

1. Volunteers have contributed their talents to supplement the work of the professional and paraprofessional staff. 1 2 3 4 5

2. Non-school community facilities for use as classrooms have been incorporated in the program planning. 1 2 3 4 5

3. The literacy program has used and distributed print and non-print materials from libraries, government agencies, community organizations and business. 1 2 3 4 5

4. Federal and State dollars designated for use in literacy-related programs have been coordinated with monies appropriated locally. 1 2 3 4 5

F. Educators provide a continuing information program to help the population better understand how literacy proficiencies can be developed.

1. Educators have provided the local population information and understanding of how people acquire literacy skills. 1 2 3 4 5

2. The above information has been supplied through a series of newsletters, brochures, lectures, informal discussions and programs, or articles in the mass media. 1 2 3 4 5

II. COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

A. A local advisory council has been established to foster and support a community-wide literacy program.

1. The Advisory Council consists of representatives from all segments of the community. 1 2 3 4 5

2. The Council has helped the leaders of the programs become aware of the community's environment and attitudes. 1 2 3 4 5

3. The Council has coordinated efforts among formal and informal educational programs. 1 2 3 4 5

4. The Council has worked toward eliminating duplication of services. 1 2 3 4 5

5. The Council has led the effort to develop support for a literacy program. 1 2 3 4 5

6. The Council has used a variety of public relations activities and information dissemination programs. 1 2 3 4 5

B. The Advisory Council is involved in assessing, planning, implementing and evaluating the Community Literacy Program.

1. Long- and short-range plans have been made for community involvement. 1 2 3 4 5

2. A thorough inventory of existing literacy needs and community resources has been conducted. 1 2 3 4 5

3. A strategy has been developed to coordinate existing programs at all levels. 1 2 3 4 5

4. A strategy has been developed to create new programs to fill in existing gaps. 1 2 3 4 5

5. Provisions for continuous monitoring and evaluation of the program exist. 1 2 3 4 5

6. A plan has been made for revision where necessary. 1 2 3 4 5

7. The plans have been the result of a cooperative effort between community institutions and the local Advisory Council. 1 2 3 4 5

8. Resource people from federal and State departments of education, universities, and other agencies have been involved in the planning. 1 2 3 4 5

C. A broad spectrum of opportunities to communicate in all of the domains of literacy is available throughout the community.

1. Convenient opportunities have been provided for people to read, view, and listen. 1 2 3 4 5

2. School, public, and special libraries have supported the literacy effort. 1 2 3 4 5

3. These institutions have offered special programs and services for specific population segments. 1 2 3 4 5

4. A variety of materials and media have been provided in other locations, such as: 1 2 3 4 5

   a) Bus stations
   b) Train stations
   c) Airports
   d) Doctors' waiting rooms
   e) Dentists' waiting rooms
   f) Shopping center rest areas
   g) Other _____

5. Special interest groups have been formed to study topics such as: 1 2 3 4 5

   a) Parenting
   b) Money management
   c) Movies
   d) Theatres

6. Other means of expanding literacy opportunities in the community have been provided, such as: 1 2 3 4 5

a) Programs on mass media
b) Story hours
c) Media fairs

D. Information about the Literacy Program is disseminated throughout the community.

1. Lay citizens in the community have received current information about the developmental progress of the literacy program. 1 2 3 4 5

2. Mass media has been used to report to the general public. 1 2 3 4 5

3. Newsletters, brochures, and presentations at meetings have been used to disseminate information. 1 2 3 4 5

E. Parents, students, and adults are involved in reinforcing literacy proficiency in the educational programs.

1. Literacy efforts have been supported through a volunteer program involving: 1 2 3 4 5

a) Students
b) Parents
c) Senior citizens
d) Retired school teachers
e) Others _____

2. Volunteers or paraprofessionals have contributed to the literacy program by: 1 2 3 4 5

a) Helping in a media program
b) Conducting story hours
c) Producing instructional material

F. All of the educational programs in the community work together to provide the best services for the most people.

1. A spirit of sharing and cooperation exists. 1 2 3 4 5

2. Continuous dialogue and communication have taken place. 1 2 3 4 5

3. An organized system of committees, panels, interest groups and/or task forces made up of lay citizens and educators has been used to bring about articulation. 1 2 3 4 5

4. Cooperation has eliminated unnecessary duplication and provided additional educational opportunities. 1 2 3 4 5

5. An effort has been made to provide new and better services for every segment of the population where needed. 1 .2 3 4 5

III. PROGRAM ORGANIZATION

A. There is articulation or coordination of curricular programs among all educational institutions in the community. 1 2 3 4 5

1. Preschool programs in the community are providing activities based on knowledge about each child's learning stages and development. 1 2 3 4 5

2. Progress made by students who attended a preschool is being reported to the receiving school in order to assure continuity of learning experiences. 1 2 3 4 5

3. The writing of a master plan for literacy development is written as a shared experience by representatives from all educational units in the district. 1 2 3 4 5

4. The curricular plan is flexible in order to accommodate individual growth and learning styles. 1 2 3 4 5

5. Adult literacy programs are being developed in cooperation with existing educational institutions. 1 2 3 4 5

6. Program articulation and coordination from preschool through the adult level are open and continuous. 1 2 3 4 5

B. The leaders of the educational program support the view that curriculum construction and revision is an ongoing process. 1 2 3 4 5

1. There is a plan for meeting the goals and objectives of curriculum development. 1 2 3 4 5

2. Curriculum development includes a plan for implementation. 1 2 3 4 5

3. Curriculum development includes ongoing evaluation and revision of the plan to meet the changing needs of the student population. 1 2 3 4 5

C. The content and objectives of a literacy program plan are based on a statement of philosophy. 1 2 3 4 5

1. A statement of philsophy does coherently explore beliefs that teachers, administrators, and students themselves have about students and learning. 1 2 3 4 5

2. The written philosophy is made available so that everyone in the community can see and read it. 1 2 3 4 5

3. The literacy program follows logically and consistently from the statement of philosophy. 1 2 3 4 5

4. The literacy program is constantly updated. 1 2 3 4 5

D. The Reading/Language Arts Programs are integrated, each component supporting all other components to form a unified literacy effort.

1. The reading language arts instruction is interrelated. 1 2 3 4 5

2. The interrelated Reading/Language Arts Program enables the student to perceive the reading, writing, listening, thinking, speaking, and visual skills on tools of communication. 1 2 3 4 5

E. The organization patterns in preschools, in-school (K-12) programs and adult centers meet the needs of all segments of the population.

1. A flexible strategy of classroom organization, allowing for large group, small group and individual instruction, is used to more effectively meet the unique needs of each learner. 1 2 3 4 5

2. Sub-populations, e.g. gifted, bilingual, handicapped, or slow learners, are mainstreamed in the literacy program. 1 2 3 4 5

F. The evaluation of individual student progress is continuous.

1. A variety of assessment/evaluation strategies are used to gain information regarding student needs and achievement. 1 2 3 4 5

2. The Assessment/Evaluation Program includes strategies to gain information regarding student feelings, attitudes, and values. 1 2 3 4 5

3. Students are included in the evaluation process as self-evaluators. 1 2 3 4 5

4. The assessment/evaluation strategies are part of an ongoing process. 1 2 3 4 5

G. The evaluation component of the total literacy program measures progress and describes the current status of literacy achievement in the student population.

1. Program evaluation is ongoing and includes a variety of strategies and instruments. 1 2 3 4 5

2. The program evaluation includes an assessment of the variables affecting the development of the program, such as teacher characteristics, administrative styles, curriculum and instructional methods, and school and classroom climate. 1 2 3 4 5

IV. MATERIALS AND METHODS

A. The Standards for Educational Media Programs in Illinois (published by the Illinois Office of Education) used as a guideline in planning the media center program of services.

1. The standards for media programs in Illinois are being used to shape the learning environment. 1 2 3 4 5

2. The student's learning styles and interests are provided for in a challenging and dynamic way through the media of instruction. 1 2 3 4 5

3. A wide range of materials and equipment is being used to provide for individual needs and differences, contributing to the mastery of basic concepts and skills, fostering creativity and initiative. 1 2 3 4 5

4. The media center meets the standards for media programs; staff requirements; selection, accessibility, and organization of materials, resources, and facilities. 1 2 3 4 5

B. Instructional materials are carefully selected to support the curriculum and meet the needs, interests, and abilities of the student population.

1. A variety of print and nonprint materials are available and effectively convey or interpret the contents or concepts. 1 2 3 4 5

2. All textbook and instructional materials purchased or produced locally meet high standards of excellence. 1 2 3 4 5

3. Textbooks and media are appropriate to the instructional level of the students using them. 1 2 3 4 5

4. Materials which deal with current topics are up to date. 1 2 3 4 5

5. Media selection is a cooperative process, involving staff and students. 1 2 3 4 5

C. A variety of materials in classrooms, reading centers, and media centers accommodates individual learner interests and needs.

1. Varied opportunities to learn are provided by an adequate supply of 1 2 3 4 5

   a) Books
   b) Study prints
   c) Audio tapes
   d) Records
   e) Models

   f) 16mm films
   g) 8mm film loops
   h) Slides
   i) Video tapes
   j) Transparencies

2. Provisions are made for the ongoing evaluation of present instructional materials. 1 2 3 4 5

3. A budget is provided for the purchase or production of new materials to be incorporated into the instructional program. 1 2 3 4 5

D. A library of carefully selected and frequently updated professional media is maintained.

1. A varied and up-to-date professional library is available for teachers, administrators, parents, and adults. 1 2 3 4 5

2. The professional library contains materials dealing with current trends, up-to-date research and alternative approaches to teaching. 1 2 3 4 5

3. The professional library includes 1 2 3 4 5

   a) Books
   b) Periodicals
   c) Manuals
   d) Reports
   e) Curriculum Guides
   f) Video tapes
   g) Filmstrips
   h) Audio tapes
   i) 16mm films

4. The professional materials are available for resources and staff development activities accomplished individually or in groups. 1 2 3 4 5

V. THE TEACHER

A. There is an inservice education program in literacy provided for all staff.

1. A needs assessment in the literacy skills area has been assessed. 1 2 3 4 5

2. A continuous inservice program in literacy skills for practicing teachers has been designed. 1 2 3 4 5

3. A continuous inservice program in literacy skills for practicing teachers has been implemented. 1 2 3 4 5

4. The reading program has been revised to respond to staff inservice. 1 2 3 4 5

5. A continuous inservice program has been provided for paraprofessional staff. 1 2 3 4 5

6. A school volunteer program has been initiated. 1 2 3 4 5

7. Pre- and inservice instruction has been provided for volunteers. 1 2 3 4 5

B. An incentive program for inservice education in reading is established. 1 2 3 4 5

1. When attending inservice programs in reading, staff are reimbursed for course tuition and materials. 1 2 3 4 5

2. Staff are given release time and reimbursement when attending professional conferences. 1 2 3 4 5

3. Staff are reimbursed for membership dues and fees in professional reading organizations. 1 2 3 4 5

4. College credit is awarded for district level inservice education programs. 1 2 3 4 5

5. Release time is provided for teachers during the school day to work with the reading coordinator or specialist to plan literacy-related classroom activities. 1 2 3 4 5

C. Each school system provides training to teachers in the content areas to develop competencies which will allow them to adjust instruction to the varying reading achievement levels of their students.

1. Teachers in the content areas are aware of reading needs of their students. 1 2 3 4 5

2. Teachers know the reading skills unique to their subject area. 1 2 3 4 5

3. Teachers adapt instruction to the needs of the students and the special demands of their content areas. 1 2 3 4 5

4. A program has been initiated for providing instruction in the teaching of reading to teachers in the content areas. 1 2 3 4 5

D. Provisions are made to measure teacher effectiveness in literacy.

1. Teachers are using an evaluative instrument to identify and describe teaching behaviors in literacy. 1 2 3 4 5

2. Teacher inservices are designed around information gained from an inventory of teacher effectiveness. 1 2 3 4 5

RIGHT TO READ STATE ADVISORY COUNCIL
(1978-79)

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